

## **Former D.C. Schools Employee and Business Owner Plead Guilty to Federal Charge in Bid-Rigging Scheme**

WASHINGTON – A former employee of the District of Columbia Public Schools and a business owner, her longtime friend, pled guilty today to a federal mail fraud charge stemming from a bid-rigging scheme involving a government contract valued at nearly \$300,000.

The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu, Nancy McNamara, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and District of Columbia Inspector General Daniel W. Lucas.

Amber R. Crowder, 39, of Washington, D.C., also known as Amber Hines, and Shauna Marie Brumfield, 40, of Sacramento, Calif., also known as Shauna Snell, each pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The charge carries a statutory maximum of 20 years in prison and potential financial penalties. The Honorable Senior Judge John D. Bates scheduled Brumfield's sentencing for Feb. 5, 2019, and Crowder's sentencing for Feb. 11, 2019.

According to a Statement of Facts agreed to by both defendants as part of their plea, Crowder worked as a program manager in the Office of Special Education (OSE) of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). In the summer of 2012, Crowder was tasked with identifying and recommending a company to aid in the scheduling of meetings related to individual education plans for special education students. Brumfield and Crowder agreed to work together to obtain the contract.

On Aug. 7, 2012, Brumfield created a company called A Simple Solution to bid on the contract. Brumfield and Crowder were partners in A Simple Solution. Crowder was not identified in any company filings or listed on any communications to DCPS in order to conceal her ownership interest in A Simple Solution. At the time, Brumfield and Crowder were also partners in another company called Education Connection, which provided tutoring services to special education students. Crowder was not identified in any Education Connection company filings or listed on any Education Connection communications to DCPS.

OSE chose A Simple Solution for the administrative assistant contract over several local qualified companies based on written documentation prepared by Crowder and her personal recommendation. In that documentation, Crowder falsely stated that A Simple Solution was an experienced company. Crowder falsely claimed that her contact person for A Simple Solution was "Marie Matthews," which was an alias used by Brumfield. Crowder did not disclose that she was on the payroll of Education Connection. A Simple Solution bid \$298,800 for the contract because Crowder disclosed to Brumfield that the expected budget for the contract was \$300,000. Two separate contracts were signed to cover the entire school year. Crowder's boyfriend signed the first contract as the purported A Simple Solution Chief Financial Officer, while Brumfield's boyfriend signed the second contract as the purported A Simple Solution branch manager in order to make it appear that A Simple Solution was an established company with multiple employees.

As a result of the fraud, from October 2012 through March 2014, the District of Columbia Public Schools paid approximately \$222,000 to A Simple Solution. Brumfield transferred approximately \$19,164 of those funds from A Simple Solution's bank account to Crowder's personal bank account.

In announcing the pleas, U.S. Attorney Liu, Assistant Director in Charge McNamara, and Inspector General Lucas commended the work of those who investigated the case from the FBI's Washington Field Office and the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General. They also acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Lucas, Paralegal Specialists Joshua

Fein and Aisha Keys, and former Paralegal Specialists Jessica Mundi and Kristy Penny. Finally, they commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anthony Saler and Kondi Kleinman, who investigated and prosecuted the case.